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THE

HIGHLAND GARB:

A Paper

READ BEFORE THE GAELIC SOCIETY OF INVERNESS.

BY

J. G. MACKAY,

GLASGOW.

Reprinted from the Society's Transactions for Private Circulation.

"A brave Highland lad, when light-footed he goes,
With plaid, and with kilt, dirk, sporran, and hose;
O, who will compare with my Highlander then,
When he comes fresh and fair like a breeze from the ben!"

INVERNESS:

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PUBLISHING COMPANY.

1878.

With Compliments

Comunn Teangeolaach Shlarcha.

Glasgow Highland Association.

27 Sept. 1878

158 Plantation St

I F Campbell Esq
of Islay,
London

Sir

Having been informed that you are to be in Glasgow at the Islay meeting on the 30th Inst. it occurred to some of our Committee that it would be an excellent opportunity for gratifying a long felt wish on the part of several

Highlander in Glasgow, to
have a Lecture from you
on some Celtic Subject
while in the town

Our friends the Islay
men (several of whom
are on our Committee,
hand their hands for
with their Society mathe-
tus thought we were
the proper parties to
take the matter up
if you can find it
convenient to do us this
honor — we will make
every effort to get
up a successful meeting

Of course as would, leave
you to choose any subject
most convenient but would
expect it to be Celtic
the date would need to
be the 31st Oct. or 1st Nov
so as not to interfere with
the Ley meeting in
any way —

Trusting to have a
favorable & early reply

I am

Sir

Your ob^{lig} Servt

McMackay

Ley

My dear Sir veto 1/18

It grieves me to refuse
to accept ~~or~~ ^{of} so great a
compliment as your offer
but I never have lectured
publicly ~~or~~ ^{or} ~~ever~~ ~~more~~ ~~now~~
and I am not
anxious fit to do it.

I am going to Glasgow only
to thank the ~~people~~ ^{of} of ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~day~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{day}
there gathered for a very
noble ~~reception~~ ^{given} to
me personally, when I
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~~month~~: Having said my
thanks publicly I shall
retire into my shell like
a ~~duck~~ ^{duck}.

I am very truly
J. H. Campbell

COMUNN GAIDHEALACH GHLASCHU.

GLASGOW

HIGHLAND ASSOCIATION.

SYLLABUS 1878-79.

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Chieftains.

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Mr. J. G. MACKAY, 158 PLANTATION ST.

Treasurer.

Mr. JOHN MUNRO.

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It is unfortunate that our Highland ancestors did not believe in the old adage, that the pen is mightier than the sword, and left so much of their history and manners to be written by "Cockney literati" and silly "view hunters," who have successively invaded the fastnesses of the Gael, who, after partaking of the hospitality of the simple-hearted natives, exported, for the edification of the

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1878.

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Sep., 3 "Eachdraidh nan Seanna Ghaidheal

Oct., 1 "Innis Ghall," - - -

Nov., 5 "Slainte," - - -

Dec., 3 "An Gaidheal 's a' bhaile-mhór,"

1879.

Jan., 7 "Saobh-chràbhadh am measg nan Ga

Feb., 4 "Land Tenure in the Highlands,"

Mar., 4 "Tuathanachas am measg nan Gaidh

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The Ordinary meetings of the Association are held in ANGUS' TEMPERANCE HOTEL, Argyle Street, on the first Tuesday of each month, to which all the members are invited.

Gaelic Concerts are held in the ASSEMBLY ROOMS, 138 Bath Street, every Saturday evening from October to March inclusive, at 8 p. m.

Parties may become Members of the Association at any time. Subscription 2s. 6d. yearly, payable in January.

J. G. MACKAY, Secy.

158 Plantation Street.

J. Sinclair, Printer, 62 Argyle Street.

THE HIGHLAND GARB.

IN these days of Celtic revival, it may not be out of place to take up the subject of the garb of the Highlanders. A good deal has already been written on this subject, and the age and authenticity of the dress have been very severely criticised. This, in many cases, has been more the result of prejudice and jealousy than careful and impartial research. To be able to form an intelligent opinion of any subject, it is necessary to be perfectly familiar with the details, and in this many of the critics on the Highland dress have been wofully far short. No doubt some of them have been very clever, learned, and able writers, but that is no reason why their decision should be taken as final, even at this age, when the "Garb of Old Gaul" is oftener seen in the streets of our busy towns, in the brilliant assemblies of the metropolis, or on the burning sands of India, than on its own native heath.

The events connected with that unfortunate but gallant attempt which went nigh to establish on the throne of his ancestors the rightful heir to the Crown, naturally directed attention to the history, institutions, manners, character, and language of a people who, though far behind in the career of civilization, had given a splendid example of chivalrous loyalty, incorruptible fidelity, and self-sacrificing devotion. To this cause then, taken in conjunction with the brilliant behaviour of the Highland regiments, the excitement caused by the proscription of the dress, and the repeal of that infamous and silly Act, may we ascribe the numerous articles which have been written on this subject; and it is a matter of infinite regret, that many of those who have undertaken this office have been ill qualified for the task. Being acquainted with a state of society and manners altogether different from what they attempted to describe—brimful of prejudice, and utterly ignorant of the language of the people—they took upon themselves to describe and criticise a dress of which they knew as much as it did of them!

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crowd, dry descriptions of cairns, castles, vitrified forts, and parallel roads, or gossiping mendacious anecdotes of the cunning, selfishness, extortion, filth, indolence, and barbarism of a race who never closed their doors against a stranger, till his treachery and ingratitude taught them to regard him with suspicion and distrust. We know of no one who would choose, if he could help it, to have his portrait taken by a caricaturist; his country described by a flimsy, shallow, conceited tourist, ignorant of its manners, customs, institutions, and language, and prevented by prejudice and incapacity from acquiring a knowledge of either the one or the other; yet this was the fate of the Highlanders, and all this was done at a time when they were prevented from defending themselves, through want of intercourse with the outer world. It was an easy matter, under such circumstances, to pass off as genuine all manner of absurdity, nonsense, and "pure fiction," without fear of contradiction.

Let us, however, pass over a whole host of authors of "Tours," "Journeys," "Dissertations," "Thoughts," and so forth, and come at once to the subject of the Highland dress. The various arguments against the dress are that the "Clan tartans," as used at present, are of modern design, and are not the same pattern as existed (if any did at all exist) previous to the year 1745; that the Highland dress was never worn by gentlemen; that it was only worn by such as could not afford trousers; that the kilt, in its present shape, was invented by an Englishman; that the dress is vulgar and indecent; and, in fact, that it is altogether only a fancy dress, and of modern invention!

We will, in the first place, give the details of a complete outfit for a Highland chief, previous to the proscription of the dress, and then take up the various objections in their order. The outfit was as follows:—A jacket, vest, and feile-beag or kilt; a belted plaid or breacan-feile,* a full-trimmed bonnet, set of belts, a pair of tartan hose made of cloth, a pair of knitted hose, a pair of garters, a silver-mounted sporran, a target, with spear, a claidheamh-mór, brace of pistols, dirk, with knife and fork, a sgian-dubh, a powder horn, and shoulder brooch.

We can gather sufficient from the works of ancient writers to prove that tartans were worn in the Highlands at a very remote period, but their knowledge of the language and manners of the people was so very meagre, that they could hardly be expected to be very minute in their description. From the particulars, however, which they handed down to us, together with an ordinary knowledge

* Breacan-an-fheilidh.

See my manuscript on this same subject. Not printed at the Society. H. Oct 1. 1878

of the history of the country, and with a little careful and unbiased research, it can be seen that the clan tartans, as we now have them, are the same as were in existence not only at the " '45," but for many centuries previous to that era.

One of the strongest arguments brought forward by our critics is the difference between the description given by several of the ancient writers on the tartans at their time, and those at present in use. George Buchanan, who wrote in the year 1612, says that "for the most part they are brown near to the color of the hadder to the effect that when they lie down amongst the hadder, the bright color of their plaids shall not bewray them;" and Martin in his "Western Isles," tells us that the tartans worn by the women were for the most part white, with a few stripes of black, blue, and red, while the tartans of most of the Clans in the districts which they visited are now very bright in colour. This is a clinching argument and evidently considered to be indisputable, but instead of being so only serves to prove a very important fact, namely, that it is no mere fancy to have the tartans divided into "Dress," "Hunting," and "Clan." Buchanan, who was tutor to King James VI., was evidently on a hunting expedition in the Highlands, and of course saw tartans used as he describes, as would be natural to the occasion, and Martin describes the Dress tartans most minutely, the only difference between them and the Clan patterns being that the large squares are made white and the smaller lines left to distinguish the sets.

Several of the Clan tartans carry on their very face sufficient to prove to an ordinary intelligent individual their age and authenticity, and go very far to show the skill, ingenuity, and neatness with which they were arranged. All who are acquainted with the Highland Clans are aware that several of them trace their origin to some common ancestor of whom they were all equally proud. Many of them prove their claims by ancient Charters and MSS.—others merely by tradition. On comparing the Armorial Bearings of these Clans we find great resemblance in many of the devices. These of course point to some particular event in the history of the founder and common ancestor of the Clans; and such is the resemblance, that in many cases it forms a very correct guide to show the Clans that are related. The science of Heraldry was very much studied among the Highlanders, and we find it frequently mentioned in the works of the bards. So much was it practised that the devices were emblazoned on the various ornaments in connection with the dress, and formed in itself to a Highlander a very ready index to his clan. In like manner, if we compare the tartans

of the various Clans descended from the same ancestor, we find the most striking resemblance, and in order to illustrate this more fully we will take up a few of the most important ones.

We will take first the tartan of the Lord of the Isles, and that of the different Clans descended from him. These are the various branches of the Macdonalds, Maedugalds, MacAlisters, and MacIntyres, and if we take the tartan known as the "Lord of the Isles," we will find that by the addition of a few lines of other colours we can form the set of any of the Clans mentioned, and that without any material disarrangement of the original.

Then let us take the "Clan Chattan" — the Mackintoshes, Macphersons, Macqueens, Shaws, Farquharsons, MacBeans, &c., &c. If we take then the Macpherson or Chief Mackintosh, we will find that by very little alteration or addition we can form any of the others. The greatest difference occurs in the Farquharson's, where the smaller lines are all that is left of the original, but still sufficient to show the set.

Third come the descendants of Connacher—the Mackays, Urquharts, and Forbeses. Though the relationship of these clans only rests on tradition, the resemblance in their armorial bearings and tartans is so very strong as to put it almost beyond a doubt. This Connacher Mackay lived in Glen-Urquhart, and being out one day hunting, accompanied by an old and faithful hound, fell in with a wild boar, long the dread of the whole surrounding country, and after a long and fierce struggle the boar was killed, but not alone, for no sooner did the ferocious animal "bite the dust" than Connacher's faithful companion breathed his last. As a momento of this deadly struggle, the Mackays have three boars' heads muzzled on their armorial bearings, and originally had two hounds for supporters. The Forbeses and Urquharts have also three boars' heads on their arms, and hounds for supporters, and the only difference between the tartans of the three clans is—where there is one red line in the Urquhart, it is white in the Forbes and black in the Mackay (with the addition of three small green lines in the latter).

Next come Siol Alpin—the Maegregors, Mackinnons, Macquaries, and Macphees. The tartans of these clans are so very like each other that the resemblance has often been pointed out by parties quite ignorant of their history and tradition.

We might go on in this way *ad infinitum*, for the same theory holds good with almost the whole of them, but we think we have quoted sufficient in the meantime to make good our point. What then do we learn from this very marked resemblance in the tartans

of these clans? It is simply this. That they are as old as the clans themselves, and were designed at whatever time they formed themselves into clans. It is quite natural to suppose that each branch of a clan, when asserting its own independence, or, to use a homely phrase, when setting up on its own account, would be desirous to have as much as possible of what belonged to an ancestor of whom they were all equally proud, and would just add a few lines to the tartan of the clan to make a distinction, but leave sufficient to show the relationship. We have this feeling very clearly shown in the armorial bearings, and there is every reason to suppose they would be equally particular with the tartan.

It was by his tartan a Macdougall was known from a Macallister; and it could be known by their tartan that they were both descended from the Lord of the Isles.

We may ask now if the tartans were of modern design, how would it happen that it is only those of the related clans that have this resemblance? by what strange chance would the M'Gregors, who were situated in Perthshire, the M'Kinnons in Skye, the M'Quarries in Mull, and the M'Phees in Colonsay, have hit upon the same design? The various clans of the "Clan Chattan" were never on such very friendly terms that they would call a public meeting to arrange a set of tartan for each other.

It is true that some of the other clan tartans have a very strong resemblance to each other; but that only happens in those that are of dark colours, which could not be blended in any other way; and many of them having only three or four colours, they were bound to be something of the same design.

It is argued that, even allowing there were recognised clan patterns, the laws proscribing the dress were so strict, and remained in existence so long, that all trace of them would be lost; but the Act only remained in force for thirty-five years, and it is well known that so great was the attachment of the Highlanders to their dress, that they took every means in their power to evade the law, and though tartan was prohibited to be worn, it would be preserved as a sacred relic of what they considered their fallen greatness; and even supposing that the dress was not worn for thirty-five years, what was to come of all the tartan that was in existence at the time it was proscribed? It was not seized as contraband goods, and it is not likely the Highlanders would destroy it—it was far too precious in their eyes for that; and even allowing that to happen, it would be necessary that all the weavers (of whom there would be one in every clachan) should die before the sets could be forgotten; and not even that would do it, in fact the whole generation

that lived and saw the tartan would need to be swept away before it could be entirely lost!

We think we have now satisfactorily proved our first point, and will, without any further comment, take up the second, viz. :— That the dress was never worn by gentlemen.

This idea has arisen merely from the fact of Highland chiefs when visiting London being dressed in the trews. Of course in these days, there were no public conveyances, and parties going long journeys had to go on horseback, and the kilt not being suitable for riding, the trews, which were intended specially for riding, were usually worn, and the London people seeing them dressed only in that garb, took it for granted, without thinking it worth while making enquiry that they wore nothing else.

In 1471, John Bishop, of Glasgow, treasurer to King James III., gives in his account for tartan for the use of the King. For a yard and a half the price was £1 10s. Scots, and the colour blue—evidently Hunting Stewart; also half-a-yard of what is called “double tartan” for the Queen.

In the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland in August, 1538, we find the following entries regarding a Highland dress for King James V., on the occasion of his making a hunting excursion to the Highlands :—

“ Item in the first for ij elnis ane quarter elne of variant collarit velvet to be the Kingis Grace ane schort Heland coit price of the elne, vi. ^{lb.} summa	xij. ^{lb.} x ^s
“ Item for iii. elnis quarter elne greene taffatys to lyne the said coit with, price of the elne x ^s summa	xxxij. ^{s.} vi ^d
“ Item iij. elnis of Heland tartane to be hoiss to the Kingis Grace price of the elne iiiij. ^{s.} iiiij. ^d summa	xij. ^s
“ Item for xv. elnis of holland claiith to be syde Helland Sarkis to the Kingis Grace price of the elne viij. ^{s.} summa	vij. ^{lb.}
“ Item for making and sewing of said sarkis	ix ^s
“ Item for twa nuce of silk to sew thame	x ^s
“ Item for twa elnis of ribanis to the handis of thame”	ij ^s

John Taylor, the Water Poet, made an excursion to Scotland in the year 1618, of which he published an account under the title of the “ Pennylesse Pilgrimage. He tells of his visit to Braemar for the purpose of paying his respects to the Earl of Mar and Sir Wm. Moray of Abercairney, and says :—

“ Thus with extreme travell ascending and descending, mounting and alighting, I came at night to the place where I would be in the Brae of Marr, which is a large county all composed of such mountaines, that Shooters hill, Birdlip hill, Gadhill, Highgate hill, Hampstead hill, or Malvernes hills are but molehills in comparison, or like a liver or a gizzard under a Capon’s wing, in respect to the altitude of their tops or perpendicularite of their bottomes. There I saw Mount Benavon with a furid’ mist upon his snowy head, instead of a nightcap, for you must understand that the oldest man alive never saw, but the snow was on the top of divers of these hills (both in summer as well as in winter). There did I find the truely noble and Right Honourable Lords John Erskine, Earl of Marr, James Stuart, Earle of Murray, George Gordon Earle of Engye, sone and heire to the Marquise of Huntley, James Erskine Earl of Buchan, and John Lord Erskine, sonne and heire to the Earl of Mar, and their Countesses, with my much honoured and my best assured and approved friend Sir Wm. Moray, Knight of Abercairney, and hundreds of other Knights, Esquires and their followers, all and every man in one habit, as if Lycurgus had been there and made laws of equality. For once in the year, which is the whole month of August and sometimes part of September, many of the Nobility and Gentry, for their pleasure doe come into these Highland countries to hunt, when they do conform themselves into the habits of the Highland men, who for the most part speake nothing but Irish, and in former times were those people which were called Redshanks.

“ Their habit is shooes with but one sole apiece, stockings which they call hose, made of a warm stuff of divers colours which they call tartane.

“ As for Breeches many of them nor their forefathers never wore any, but a jerkin of the same stuff as there hose is of with a plaed about their shoulders, which is a mantle of divers colours, much finer and lighter stufte than their hose, with blue flat caps on their heads, a hankerchief knit with two knots about their necks, and thus they are attyred.”

John Duke of Argyle, and Greenwich, the author of the well-known song, “ Argyle is my Name,” says in the third verse:—

I'll quickly lay down my sword and my gun,
And I'll put my plaid and my bonnet on,
Wi' my plaiding, stockings, and leather heeled shoon,
They'll mak' me appear a fine sprightly loon;
And when I am dressed thus frae tap to tae,
Hame to my Maggie, I think for to gae,
Wi' my Claymore hinging doon to my heel,
To whang at the bannocks o' barley meal.

There is a picture in Taymouth Castle of the Regent Murray in full Highland costume (breacan feile.) There are also pictures at Holyrood Palace, and Armidale and Dunrobin Castles, of gentlemen dressed in the kilt.

Burt, who wrote in the year 1729, mentions several Highland chiefs as wearing the kilt. The chiefs and officers who followed Prince Charlie wore it, and if none of them were gentlemen, surely it will be allowed that Prince Charlie himself was at least a gentleman, and he wore it.

We come now to the next point—"That the kilt, in its present shape, was invented by an Englishman." This is a most important point, and, at the same time the most ridiculous charge of the whole, and it is really astonishing to find so many able and intelligent writers taking up the idea, and repeating it without making any investigation as to the correctness of it. This opinion was first broached by an anonymous writer in the "Scots Magazine," in the year 1798, who says the "Feileadh beag" was first introduced in the year 1728, by Rawlinson or Parkinson, the Superintendent of the Lead mines at Tyndrum, who, finding his Highland labourers encumbered with their Belted plaids, taught them to separate the plaid from the kilt, and sew it in its present form."

Now to any one at all acquainted with the history and customs of the Highlanders, this must appear a very extraordinary statement, and more so that it has been accepted as truth by writers who have taken upon themselves the task of enlightening us on our Highland History.

Before taking up any of the proofs which we propose bringing against this assertion we will take a look at the argument itself, and the authority, namely, "An Anonymous Writer," in the year 1798. He tells us of a thing that happened in the year 1728, exactly 70 years previous. Now is it not very strange that this individual was the only person that knew of such a thing, and that he should be so long in making it public! Upon this authority alone then is the dress which we have fondly ascribed to our ancestors, from time immemorial, taken from us and the credit given to an Englishman.

For the sake of those who may not be familiar with the different styles of the dress, it may be as well to give a few particulars:—The breacan-feile was twelve yards of tartan, *i.e.*, six yards of double tartan, and was plaited and fastened round the body by a belt, the lower part forming the kilt, and the other half being fixed on the shoulder by a brooch, hung down behind, and thus formed the plaid, in the same shape as the belted plaids now used by the

military, which is an imitation of it. There was great neatness displayed in arranging the plaits so as to show the set of the tartan. This was a particularly convenient style of dress, as the plaid hung loosely behind, and did not encumber the arms, and in wet weather could be drawn over the shoulders, and formed a sufficient covering for a Highlander, while, in the event of a camping out at night, it could be thrown loose, and covered the whole body. The feileadh beag, it is scarcely necessary to say, is the style of dress now in use.

The trews was a style of breeches worn close to the skin, the trews and hose being of one piece, made of tartan and cut on the cross, and were used for riding on horseback.

There was another style of the dress called the feildag, which was a piece of plain tartan drawn round the body like the feileadh-beag, but not plaited.

Now is it not very ridiculous to suppose that if the Highlanders were ingenious enough to think of plaiting the kilt and making the tartan, that they would not see the necessity of separating it from the plaid when occasion needed it, without it being pointed out by an Englishman? Or is it at all likely that a light-footed, active race like the Highlanders would go about their daily avocations with twelve yards of tartan hanging about them? They were known to be fond of leaping, running, throwing the stone and the hammer, tossing the caber, shinty, and many other athletic games which needed great activity and lightness, and how could they engage in such exercises encumbered with both kilt and plaid? Every Highlander was a gentleman, but still he was his own joiner, shoemaker, and farm labourer, &c. They were particularly jealous of strangers, and adhered strictly to the customs and manners handed down to them from their ancestors. Burt says:—"The whole people are fond and tenacious of the Highland clothing, as you may believe by what is here to follow:—

"Being in a wet season upon one of my peregrinations accompanied by a Highland gentleman, who was one of the Clan through which I was passing, I observed the women to be in great anger with him about something that I did not understand, at length I asked him wherein he offended them. Upon this question he laughed, and told me his greatcoat was the cause of their wrath, and their reproach was that he could not be content with the garb of his ancestors, but was degenerated into a Lowlander, and condescended to follow their unmanly fashions."

If such then were their feelings towards strangers and their customs, is it at all likely that they would take to an alteration or improvement in a dress of which they were so proud, and that at the

hands of a hated Saxon? Now, supposing the feileadh-beag was invented by Parkinson, how did it happen that it was known all over the Highlands at the same time? They had no "Gazette of Fashion" in those days, to tell them that a new style of kilt was invented at Tyndrum. Again, if the feileadh-beag was such an improvement on the breacan-feile, how was the latter not discontinued, for we find it in use for the purposes for which it was intended, down to the proscription of the dress, though the former would have been a saving of a considerable quantity of cloth?

In the year 1729 the Independent Companies of the *Freiceadan dubh* or Black Watch were raised. The uniform of the corps consisted of a scarlet jacket and waistcoat and belted plaid or Breacan Feile. At night the plaid served the purpose of a blanket, and was sufficient covering for a Highlander. They were called belted plaids from being kept tight to the body with a belt, and were worn on guard, reviews, and on all occasions when the men were in full dress. In the barracks and when not on duty the little kilt or Feileadh beag was worn.* This was just one year after the reputed invention of the Feileadh beag, and still we find both garbs worn by the same men for the different purposes for which they were intended, viz., the Breacan Feile for full dress or for going on any expedition, and the Feileadh beag for undress or for going about their daily avocations.

Burt, who wrote about the year 1729, gives a description of the Highland dress, and in his work there is a plate showing the dress in the three different forms, viz., "Triubhais," "Breacan Feile," and "Feile beag." Still he makes no mention of Parkinson's invention, and there is not the slightest doubt, if there were any truth in the story, but he would be only too glad of the chance, as he had done all in his power to hold the Highlanders up to ridicule. He mentions the kilt several times, calling it "Quelt." He also mentions another matter which, though there would be no further evidence, would be sufficient in itself to settle the dispute. "I have observed before," he says, "that the plaid serves the ordinary people for a cloak by day and bedding by night. By the latter it imbibes so much perspiration that no one day can free it from the smell, and even some of better than ordinary appearance when the plaid falls from the shoulder or otherwise requires to be re-adjusted, while you are talking with them, toss it over again, as some people do the knots of their wigs, which conveys the offence in whiffs that are intolerable. Of this they don't seem to be sensible, for it is often done only to give themselves airs."

* Vide General Stewart's "Sketches of the Highlanders."

If this then was the Breacan Feile or belted plaid, how could it be tossed over the shoulder, seeing it was only fastened on to the shoulder from behind, and there would not be more than a few inches in front altogether. It was nothing more or less than the "Breacan Guaille" or shoulder plaid, the same as now worn, and was used with the "Feileadh beag." It was worn by shepherds, huntsmen, &c., on account of its being easily thrown aside, but was seldom worn on warlike expeditions, as it cumbered the arms and was a hindrance in the use of their weapons.

About the year 1513 there was a battle fought in Badenoch, between the Frasers and the Macdonalds of Clanranald. The day being very hot (3rd July), the Frasers threw off their plaids and jackets, and fought in their shirt sleeves, from which circumstance the battle was called Blar-na-leine, or the Field of Shirts; and at the battle of Tippermuir, in the year 1643, and the battle of Sherriffmuir, in the year 1715, several of the Highlanders threw aside their plaids and jackets and fought in the same way. Some writers would like people to understand that they fought "stark naked," or with no covering but their shirts. This is very ridiculous, and it is very questionable if they would fight any better "in their shirts" than with the Feileadh beag, unencumbered by plaid or jacket, than which they could not possibly get a freer or lighter fighting garb. Martin thus describes their method of fighting:—"The chief of each tribe, after the arrows are spent, advance within shot, having first laid aside their *Upper Garments*, and after one general discharge, attack. Aut mors cita, aut victoria laeta."

It stands to reason that the Highlanders who stripped themselves of their plaids as related above, were dressed in the Feileadh beag, and would necessarily require to throw aside their plaids, as they could not wield the Claidheamh-mor encumbered with them; whereas if they had been dressed in the Breacan Feile or Belted Plaid there would be no occasion for them to throw anything aside, as their shoulders would be perfectly free.

Not only was the Feileadh beag known in the Highlands at a very remote period, but it was known in the Lowlands as being the dress of the Highlanders, and we have abundant proofs of this in the many songs and poems composed about the "'15," all of which prove that it was known in the Lowlands, which could not possibly happen if it was only invented in 1728.

In the second verse of the old Jacobite song, "The White Cockade," which refers to the "'15," we find the following:—

O leze me on the philabeg,
The hairy hough and gartered leg,

But aye the thing that tak's my e'e,
Is the White Cockade aboon the bree.

This song was composed by a Buchan lady, on her betrothed joining the rebellion under the Earl of Mar, in the year 1715.

In the song, "Though Geordie Reigns in Jamie's Stead," which was composed about the same time, we find the following verse :—

He wears a Broadsword by his side,
And weel he kens to draw that,
The Target and the Highland plaid,
The shoulder belt and a' that,
A Bonnet bound with ribbons blue,
A White Cockade and a' that,
The tartan hose and Philabeg,
Which mak's me blyth for a' that.

In a song, composed on the battle of Sheriffmuir, by the Rev. John Barclay of Muthills, who was born in the year 1734, we find the Feileadh-beag mentioned thus :—

The Camerons fled as they were mad,
Lifting their neighbour's cows man,
Mackenzie and the Stewarts fled,
But Philabeg or trews man ;
Had they behaved like Donald's corps,
And killed all those came them before,
Their King had gone to France no more ;
Then each whig saint would soon repent,
And straight recant his covenant,
And rent it at the news man.

Though this gentleman lived after the date of the reputed invention of the Feileadh beag, still he was an intelligent and educated man, and living on the confines of the Highlands, he would be sure to hear of it, if there was any truth in the story, and would not picture them as being in that garb if it was invented thirteen years later.

We could still bring forward proof after proof, but think we have quoted sufficient to put the matter beyond the reach of a doubt ; and it is astonishing that in the face of such evidence the charge should ever have been made, and more so, that it should be repeated by parties who ought to know better, if they chose to make enquiry.

Keltie, in the "History of the Highland Clans," says—"It

appears to be a well-authenticated fact that the kilt or philabeg, as distinct from the belted plaid, is a comparatively modern article of dress in the Highlands ;" and then he goes on to give the Parkinson theory. We may now ask, who has this theory been acknowledged by ? Was it acknowledged by a single individual whose opinion is worth the paper it is written on ? Did Skene believe it ? Did General Stewart, Logan, Robertson, Browne, or any other who was an authority on Highland matters believe it ? *No, certainly not.*

We will now take up the fourth charge, viz. : That the Highland dress is vulgar and indecent. The garb is called beggarly, grossly indecent, and absurd—with tasteless regularity and “vulgar glare of the tartan.”

The colours of the tartan are not more red or glaring than the peers' robes and military uniforms, or the Royal livery, and yet these are not considered vulgar !

One of the most distinguished artists of his age, Mr. West, President of the Royal Academy, differs from this opinion. He has expressed his surprise at the blending and arranging of the colours, and considers that great art, that is to say, much knowledge of the principles of colouring with pleasing effect has been displayed in the composition of several of the Clan tartans, regarding them in general as specimens of natural taste, something analogous to the affecting but artless strains of the native music of Scotland.

In “Eustace's Classical Tour,” in treating of the various costumes of the European and Asiatic nations, he says regarding the Highland dress, “In one corner of Great Britain, a dress is worn by which the two extremes are avoided. It has the easy folds of a drapery which takes away from it the constraint and angular air of the ordinary habits, and is at the same time sufficiently light and succinct to answer all the purposes of activity and ready motion.”

We do not say that some of the bright patterns, such as M'Pherson, M'Lean, Ross, Fraser, &c., are particularly well suited for every occupation in life ; but there is a remedy for this, of which our calumniators are evidently not aware. The clans having bright tartans had also a darker set called “hunting tartan,” which was usually worn on every-day occasions, and was formed by the larger checks being made brown, green, or any other dark colour, but the arrangement kept the same to show the clan. The dress pattern was formed in the same way, by making the larger checks white ; and it is difficult to conceive of anything more gentlemanly or tastefully got up than the Hunting M'Pherson, Fraser, or M'Lean. The colours are arranged to show the clan patterns, and at the same time blended so correctly as to make them both pleasing

to the eye and serviceable for wear ; and as to the dress being indecent, we would ask what is the difference between a Highlander exposing 6 inches of his knees and our fashionable and aristocratic ladies exposing their arms and breasts ? In regard to the question of decency, General Stewart, in his Sketches gives an account of a ball given by the officers of the Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment, to which the reader may be referred.

Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, in her "Journal of Our Life in the Highlands," makes mention several times of the Highland dress. The nobles and gentlemen attending the Court at Balmoral wore it ; all the Royal servants wore it ; and Prince Albert, the Prince of Wales, and the other Princes of the Royal Family showed they did not think it indecent, by wearing it. Her Majesty gives her opinion of it several times in such expressions as these :— "The men looked so handsome in their kilts." "M'Donald, in his shooting jacket and kilt, looked quite a picture ; he was remarkably tall and handsome."

Burt says—"The stockings rise no higher than the thick of the calf, and from the middle of the thigh to the middle of the leg is a naked space, which, being exposed to all weather, becomes tanned and freckled, and the joint being mostly infected with the country distemper, the whole is very disagreeable to the eye." (Martin, on the other hand, says—"The plaid is tied round the middle with a leather belt. It is plaited from the belt to the knee very nicely.") Burt is here, evidently, as in many other instances, drawing on his imagination, for, as in other cases, the one part of his story cuts up the other. In describing the *breacan feile* or belted plaid, he says it is formed of a plaid two breadths wide ; that is, between $\frac{3}{4}$ of a yard and one yard when folded on the double ; and, the plaid being belted at the waist, he must be an extraordinary size of a man indeed that the lower end would only reach the middle of his thigh ; and again the hose could not be fixed on the middle of the calf, as they would not remain up ; they must necessarily be fixed on the top of the calf. The acknowledged length of the kilt is to the middle of the knee-cap, so that a man could go on his knees without it touching the ground. And as to the knees being freckled or affected with distemper, we can say, without fear of contradiction, that it is a base and malicious exaggeration. Burt may have seen one instance of what he describes, but to give that as a general description is false.

We are here able to speak from experience, having been innocent of breeches until 20 years of age, wearing the kilt in all weathers, being exposed to all manner of rough treatment from brushwood,

heather, brambles, &c., and can safely say that we never experienced the slightest discomfort or had any distemper that would hurt the feelings of the daintiest or most tender-hearted cockney. We have seen farmers, shepherds, and gamekeepers who never wore anything but the kilt, and were exposed to the very same treatment as the Highlanders in Burt's days, and they were equally free from anything unpleasant.

“That the dress is altogether a fancy dress and of modern invention” is another baseless assertion. We have already said so much bearing on this point that we may dispose of it in a short time. The history of our Highland regiments shows that instead of being a fancy dress it is a most serviceable one, and that they were able to undergo hardships and fatigues which men dressed in the low country garb could not endure. We could give numerous instances of this, but we just give two as being sufficient to show that it is no mere assertion:—In the year 1757, when the Fraser Highlanders landed in North America, it was proposed to change the uniform, as the Highland dress was said to be unfit for the severe winters and hot summers of that country. The officers and soldiers vehemently protested against any change, and Colonel Fraser explained to the Commander-in-chief the strong attachment which the men had to their national dress, and the consequences that might follow if deprived of it. This representation was successful. In the words of a veteran who embarked and returned with the regiment:—“Thanks to our generous chief we were allowed to wear the garb of our fathers, and in the course of six winters showed the doctors that they did not understand our constitutions, for in the coldest winters our men were more healthy than those regiments who wore breeches and warm clothing.”

In no former campaign was the superiority of the Highlanders over their companions-in-arms in enduring privations and fatigues, more conspicuous than in Holland, in the year 1794; for whilst some of the other regiments lost more than 300 men by disease alone, the 42nd, which had 300 young recruits in its ranks, lost only 25, including those killed in battle, from the time of their disembarkation at Ostend, on 26th January, till their embarkation at Bremen on the 14th of April.—(General Stewart.)

Such was the opinion the sagacious President Forbes had of the dress, that at the time of its proscription, in writing on the subject to Brodie of Brodie, then Lord Lyon for Scotland, he says:—“The garb is certainly very loose, and fits men inured to it to make very quick marches, to go through very great fatigues, to bear out against the inclemency of the weather, to wade through rivers,

shelter in huts, woods, and rocks, upon occasions which men dressed in the low country garb could not possibly endure. But it is to be considered that, as the Highlands are circumstanced at present, it is, at least it seems to me, to be an utter impossibility, without the advantage of the dress, for the inhabitants to tend their cattle and go through the other parts of their business, not to speak of paying their rents to the landlords."

The gallant veteran, Colonel Cameron of Erracht, had an equally good opinion of the serviceableness of the dress. When it was proposed to change the uniform of his regiment, he argued that it was healthier, cleanlier, and more comfortable for the men, besides being a greater saving in the long run, and we can get good proof of this in our own day, for where can we see such sturdy, healthy, and stalwart men as the Highland farmers and shepherds, who make a habit of wearing the garb of their fathers. It is a known fact that men who have worn the kilt in their youth are always stouter and hardier than those who have worn trousers.

If a Highlander may be allowed to be a judge of what suits best, we can just say with Kenneth M'Kenzie himself, the Bard :—

hymn

'Se 'feile preasach tlachd mo rùin,
'S osan nach ruig faisg an glùn,
'S cota breac nam basan dlù,
'S bonaid dhù-ghorm thogarrach.

B'an nsa leam a' féile cuaiach
Na casag de 'n aodach luaight',
'S brigis nan ceann glaichean cruaidh—
Gur e 'n droch-uair a thogainn dh'i.

Tha mo run do'n éideadh las,
Cuach an fhéilidh nan dlù bhas,
Shiubhlain leis 's na sléibhteán cas,
'S rachainn brais air obair leis!

Ged a tharlainn anns a' bheinn
Fad na seachduin 's mi leam fén
Fuachd na h-oidhcheil' cha dean dhomh beud—
Tha 'm breacan fhein cho caidearach.

Am feileadh air am beil mi 'n geall,
Dealg nar guaillibh suas gun fheall,
Crios ga għlasadh las neo-theann,
'S biodh e gach am gu baganta.

'S ann leam bu taitneach e bhi 'n àird
'N ám dhomh tachairt ri mo ghràdh—
B' fhearr leam seachduin dhe na dha
De 'n bhrigis ghrainnde rag-sheallach!

“That the dress is of modern invention.” We have already proved that the tartans are very ancient, and that the kilt in its present shape was the dress of our ancestors for many centuries, but we now wish to point out the great age of the dress altogether, and that it was in use as far back as being beyond the reach of either history or tradition.

Some years ago a sculptured stone was dug up from the ruins of the Roman Wall (which was constructed in the year 140), representing three figures dressed exactly in the ancient garb of the Highlanders.

Herodian, who wrote about the year 204, in speaking of the dress of the Caledonians says, they were only partly clothed, which would agree with the opinion of many subsequent writers on the Highland dress.

The Sculptured Stones of Scotland also give clear and decided evidence of the great antiquity of the dress, and their period may be said to extend from the sixth to the ninth century. There is one at Dupplin in Perthshire, Forres in Morayshire, Nigg in Ross-shire, each representing figures in the Highland dress.

There is also a sculptured slab in the Antiquarian Museum, Edinburgh, which was found at Dull in Perthshire, some years ago, and represents several figures in the Highland dress. In Kilmuir, Skye, there is also a rock bearing a natural representation of the dress. It is called “Creag an fheilidh,” or the rock of the kilt, from its marked resemblance to a man dressed in the kilt. This name must be coeval with the arrival of the Gael in Skye, for being a natural representation, it could not get the name through any event or accident.

In the Norwegian Sagas, in reference to the expedition of King Magnus to the Western Isles, in the year 1093, it is said that *he adopted the costumes in use* in the Western lands on his return, and likewise many of his followers; and for this he was called Magnus Barefoot.

The seal of King Alexander I., whose reign began in 1107, represents that monarch in the Feileadh-beag, and also with the round Highland target. King David I., who began to reign in 1124, and Malcolm IV., in 1153, used a seal identical with that used by Alexander I., and their adopting it proves conclusively that they wore the dress represented.

In the song composed on the battle of Harlaw, in 1411, by M'Mhuirich, bard to the Lord of the Isles, the Highland dress is mentioned, and also in a Scotch song made on the same occasion.

We think therefore that with a careful and deliberate comparison of the proofs and authorities brought forward, it will be found that we have made good our point, and rebutted each of the various charges brought against the dress, and that the clan tartans are as old as the Clans themselves, and were known in the Highlands from the remotest ages ; that the kilt was the dress of the chief as well as the clansman, and also of royalty ; that the Feileadh-beag was *not* invented by an Englishman ; that it was known in the Highlands before an Englishman was ever seen there ; that the dress is neither vulgar nor indecent, but that it is both gentlemanly and becoming ; that instead of being a fancy dress, it is a most serviceable and comfortable one ; and that its age is beyond the reach of either history or tradition.

Oh first of Garbs, garment of happy fate,
So long employed, of such an antique date,
Look back some thousand years till records fail,
And lose themselves in some romantic tale ;
We'll find our God-like fathers nobly scorned
To be by any other dress adorned.

—Allan Ramsay.

We may now be blamed for making "much ado about nothing," and creating a fuss about such a simple matter as a dress, but surely if it was worth the while for such eminent men as Pinkerton, Dr. McCulloch, Capt. Burt, and many others (not to speak of the numerous Cockney newspaper correspondents), to misrepresent it, it is worth our trouble to vindicate it ; or if it was considered such an important matter as to be worthy of a debate in the British Parliament, our time is not lost over it.

The subject of the Highland dress should be an interesting one not only to Highlanders, but to Lowlanders, when we consider what it has done for Scotland : that it is this dress alone that has sustained the military character of Scotland since the Union ; for, while we hear of the English Navy and Army, the English Parliament, the English Colonies, &c., Scotland is never once mentioned. In the great naval victories of Britain we have never heard of Scotch sailors, nor should we ever hear of the soldiers of Scotland, were it not for those corps distinguished by their national dress ; and were it not then for this dress, Scotland would be as low in military as in naval fame, and as unnoticed at Waterloo and Alex-

andria, as at Trafalgar and Aboukir. In the Seven Years' War in Germany, 1200 Highlanders gave celebrity to the warlike character of Scotland, at the same time that (on a calculation from the usual proportion) there were at least 3000 Scotch soldiers intermixed with the English regiments under Prince Ferdinand, but although each of these men had been as brave as Julius Caesar, we should never have heard of Scotland. Fortunately, however, there was no mistaking "the brave band of Highlanders," with their plaids and broadswords.

The assault on San Sebastian called forth stronger proofs of bravery than almost any enterprise of the Peninsular campaigns. On that occasion there was three times the number of Scotch officers and soldiers than there was at Aroyos de Molino, where the Gordon Highlanders were engaged, and where a detachment of the French Army was surprised and dispersed. This was a mere skirmish in comparison to the assault on San Sebastian, in which Scotland was never mentioned; while the other affair, with men distinguished by a particular garb, is introduced into the ballads of the country, and the tune "Hey, Johnnie Cope" has gained additional celebrity by being played that morning, when the pipers struck up the advance in quick time to the attack.

Few regiments were more purely Scotch than the "Greys," when the invincible charges made by them at Waterloo called forth the admiration of Bonaparte, who exclaimed—"Qu'ils sont terribles ces chevaux gris." He knew not of what country they were, but when he saw the Gordon Highlanders, in their kilts and bonnets, charge his solid columns, he at once discovered their country, and, while they contributed so much to blast his earthly glory, he could not suppress his admiration of "*Les braves Ecossais.*"—(General Stewart).

In short, if there were no Highland uniform, we would hear as little of the military character of Scotland as we do of the naval exploits. There might be, as there always are, individual instances of distinguished merit, but there would be no national character.

And O ! loved warriors of the minstrel land,
Yonder your bonnets nod, your tartans wave—
The rugged form may mark the mountain band,
And harsher features and a mien more grave ;
But ne'er in battlefield throbbed heart so brave
As that which beats beneath the Scottish plaid.
And when the pibroch bids the battle rave,
And level for the charge your arms are laid,
Where lives the desperate foe that for such onset staid.

—*Scott.*

We say, therefore, that Lowlanders as well as Highlanders should interest themselves in a dress so much connected with the honour of their country—a dress whose checks ~~had~~ so often been dyed with the blood of its devoted wearer on many a hard fought field ; and we would conclude in the words of John Campbell, Leadaig :—

fe
Is toigh leam a' Ghaidhealtachd, 's toigh leam gach gleann,
Gach eas agus coirf an dùthach nam beann ;
Is toigh leam na gillean 'nan, eideadh glan ùr
A's boineid Ghlinn-Garaidh mu'n camagan dlúth.

Is toigh leam an deise o 'mullach gu 'bonn—
Am breacan, an t-osan, an sporan 's an lann ;
Is toigh leam iad sgeadaicht, an éideadh an tir—
Ach 's suarach an deise seach seasmhachd an eridh'.

Read October 1 1878

This is very heavy a
good paper, but it is
too strong upon tartan
and too weak upon proof

In fact in fifty ways it
appears from authority
that modern tartans ~~are~~
more not worse by
men of the name who
had them portraiture painted
and left them on
clothes. P. J. Prince
Charles left a coat
and it is not Stewart
tartan or any tartan
now made. See my
paper on the J.R.



